

The great differences, as appears to me, are these—(1) that *L. mutus* ♂, in spring, has the breast clothed more or less in deep *black* feathers, not one of which is to be seen in *L. rupestris*, and (2) that *L. mutus* (of both sexes) in autumn puts on a lavender-grey upper dress, of which there is only the least trace in any examples of *L. rupestris* (your nos. 5 and 6 [both adult males and one of which is figured] showing the most of it that I have ever seen), while the majority [being younger birds] have not any trace of such a colour. The female specimens of your series are also very interesting, but call for no particular remark, except that the coloured portion of their plumage is darker than I had expected to see, judging from others, killed in autumn, that I have.”

XL.—*Stray Ornithological Notes.* By W. EDWIN BROOKS,
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SINCE I came to Canada I have principally paid attention to the birds of European affinity, to the neglect of the so-called “Warblers” of Canada, with their sharp-pointed, almost Parine bills, although my youngest son takes a great interest in the latter.

One of our commonest birds in Ontario is the Shore-Lark (*Otocorys alpestris*). During the comparatively mild open winter of 1881–1882 some of these birds remained here the whole winter. Even in January, during fine frosty mornings, I heard them singing, usually seated on the top of the fence-posts; we have no hawthorn hedges here, only wooden rail fences. The song of the Shore-Lark has been sometimes spoken of as very melodious, but I do not think any bird has a poorer one; it is almost exactly like that of the European Common Bunting, a sort of monotonous drawl. Unlike any other species with which I am acquainted, this bird has a second song, perhaps even less melodious than the drawl, a feeble unmusical twitter, which it does not often utter, and I only remember hearing it as the bird soared round, something in the manner of a Sky-Lark; but it also sometimes

sings its first and principal song on the wing. However, the Shore-Lark's is not the only very poor song that has been termed pretty.

This species begins to breed very early. On the 2nd April, 1884, I took a nest in a pasture-field about 200 yards from my house, with three eggs, which were somewhat incubated, and must have been laid by the 27th of March, the building of the nest having been commenced perhaps a week earlier. There was a fall of snow after the female had begun to sit, and her warmth had melted a small hole, about five inches in diameter, above the nest. A month or so later, my son Allan found a nest of young birds in one of my wheat-fields. This year we found another nest with four eggs, in a clover-field close to the house, on the 27th of May, the eggs in it being somewhat incubated; but the spring this year was a late one, the snow remaining on the ground till the beginning of April. I have only seen one species of Shore-Lark here, viz. *O. alpestris*. The amount of yellow about the throat is variable, and it fades away as the summer advances, often leaving the part formerly yellow quite white. After the autumn moult the yellow is regained.

During the winter of 1882-3 I procured a good number of Mealy Redpoles, *Linota linaria* (Linnaeus), which remained about till the beginning of April, and I frequently heard the males singing. The song is even poorer than that of the Shore-Lark, being the same note very rapidly repeated; and those who have heard the song of the American Chipping Sparrow will understand the style of that of the Mealy Redpole. Its voice and song differ from those of the Lesser Redpole, *L. rufescens*; it is, too, a much larger bird, the largest I got measuring 5·7 inches; but about 5 inches is the length of an average male. Males in the red plumage may be obtained as soon as they arrive, in the beginning of November; they are then browner and less mealy-looking. As the spring advances, the fulvous feathers fade to almost or quite white. The males, however, become much brighter red as summer approaches, a male dated May, given to me by Mr. Dresser, being intensely red. It should be remembered

that the red plumage is as much a winter plumage as any, inasmuch as it is assumed at the autumn moult by, I believe, young birds of the year only. The great majority of the males were in the grey-brown (or female) plumage, including the large 5·7 in. bird, before mentioned. As in the case of Crossbills, Pine-Grosbeaks, and other red-plumaged birds, the fine red colour appertains only to the young male, and, once moulted, is never regained. The rump and under tail-coverts are always boldly streaked.

I frequently heard Redpoles flying by, in the fall, uttering a different note from this species, and some of them appeared to me decidedly larger than it. This year some settled in my orchard; and Allan procured a very fine rosy male on the 3rd of February, out of a mixed flock in which the Mealy Redpole was much the more numerous. We heard the call-note of the second species, and agreed that it was different from that of the Mealy Redpole; and the above example I identified as *L. exilipes* (Coues). It measured 5·3 inches in the flesh, so that it can hardly be said to be a larger bird than *L. linaria*. Speaking of this species, Mr. Seebohm says:—"Some writers make a fourth species, *L. exilipes* (Coues), which may be said to be intermediate between the Arctic and the Greenland forms. In the valley of the Petchora we found both *L. linaria* (Linn.) and *L. exilipes* (Coues), and came to the conclusion that the latter is nothing but the fully adult winter plumage of the former" ('Siberia in Europe,' p. 51).

Now why was such a conclusion arrived at? Mr. A. O. Hume and I came to the conclusion that the buff plumage of *Aquila fulvescens* (Gray and Hardwicke) was the young plumage of *Aquila clanga* (Pallas); but we made a notable blunder. I first jumped to the conclusion, I hardly know why, and my friend coincided! The two species were in company, searching for frogs in a dried-up marsh. But a rash conclusion should not be drawn because birds are in company; for how often have I seen Snow-Buntings mixed with Redpoles. Even to oblige my friend, I can never consent to the suppression of such a fine species of Linnet as

L. exilipes, and the man who discriminated it deserves all credit. The points of distinction are:—(1) difference in voice; (2) its spotless rump; (3) its white unstreaked under tail-coverts; (4) the few and narrow streaks on the flanks; (5) the very pale blush-red breast and rump, contrasted with the vivid red of *L. linaria*; (6) the very broad white edgings to the tertials and tail-feathers; (7) the very much whiter or mealy tone of the upper plumage; (8) the most decidedly smaller and shorter bill.

Now I think half this number of distinctive points would be ample to separate any small bird from another; and all the points I have noted are good ones. One Sunday a number of *L. exilipes* came and settled in a tamarac or larch tree, about five yards from my bedroom window. I examined them for some time as they fed on the cones, and they closely resembled the specimen I have, but I did not observe any with the pale rosy tint on the breast. We searched hard for them the next day, but not one was to be seen.

Last winter I went to Hamilton to examine a pair of the Greenland Redpole, *L. hornemanni*, killed in January 1860, near Galt, which is about 35 miles from here; they are now in the possession of Mr. T. McIlwraith, who has mounted them beautifully. From the difference in size, they appear to be male and female. The male looks about one third larger than my *L. exilipes*, of similar white mealy plumage, but has not the broad white edgings to the tail-feathers, the tail being more like that of the ordinary Mealy Redpole, as far as amount of white edging is concerned. The bird is very grey-and-white all over, with a few streaks about the breast of a greyish brown, and very few narrow pale ones on the flanks; there is the faintest possible rosy blush on the breast, like that observable on old examples of the Mealy Redpole which have passed their red stage. The females of the latter have also sometimes this faint pink blush, as well as those minute specks of reddish brown on the cheeks. The lower back of the large Greenland bird is very white, with one or two pale grey-brown dashes on the upper tail-coverts. The bill is the full size of that of the ordinary Mealy Redpole. The

sides of the face are white, with a few small grey streaks, and there is none of the fulvous tinge sometimes observable on the cheeks of *L. exilipes*.

This Greenland bird may be briefly described as a white bird streaked with slate-grey. I noticed one narrow grey-brown streak on the central lower tail-coverts, and the supposed female is more boldly streaked on the lower tail-coverts. With reference to the example of *L. hornemanni* killed at Whitburn in England, Mr. Hancock writes:—"I have examined the Whitburn bird, and it has a streak or two on the under tail-coverts; and another specimen like it, which I had from Seebohm, is also streaked on the under tail-coverts." All the specimens I have seen of *L. linaria* and of *L. rufescens* are boldly streaked on the lower tail-coverts. As far as I have ascertained at present, the spotless under tail-coverts of *L. exilipes* form a good distinction, apart from the general white tone of the bird. By any one who has even a moderate power of observation it should never be confounded with *L. linaria*. Both ends of the bird strongly proclaim distinctness.

Mr. McIlwraith's female *L. hornemanni* strongly resembles the male; but the slate-grey predominates, while in the male the white predominates. It appears also to be of the size of an ordinary male *L. linaria*. I could not take any measurements, as they were in a large closed glass case with numerous other small birds.

To separate *L. exilipes* from *L. hornemanni* we have therefore:—(1) superior size of the latter; (2) the want of the broad white edgings to tertials and tail-feathers; (3) larger bill; (4) longer wing. I forgot to mention that my male *L. exilipes* has a wing exactly 3 inches long.

When in good plumage I do not think there need be any difficulty in separating these four species of *Linota*. We hear a great deal about "intermediate forms," said to bridge over between species; but it is a curious thing that I have not come across anything of the kind, and I have worked amongst small birds as much as most men. The fact is, men strongly imbued with Darwinian principles are not in a fit state of mind to distinguish one species from another, and

their powerful bias impels them to confound things which differ. Species are not species with them, but evolved forms, and so it must be till they die ; but it is not necessary that every one should follow their line of thought, which is most decidedly inconvenient in natural history. A man labours hard to discriminate a species, and the evolutionists would abolish it in a moment if they could. Fortunately they have never yet brought forward anything in the way of proof*.

A subject to which I should like once more to refer, if not out of place here, is the question, What is *Milvus govinda* of Sykes?

Lately, Mr. Gurney was kind enough to send me his 'List of the Diurnal Birds of Prey in the Norwich Museum,' in which he says, in a footnote (p. 80):—"Mr. Brooks here repeats the reasons which he had previously given in 'Stray Feathers,' vol. iv. p. 272, for considering that '*Milvus govinda*' of Sykes was intended by him as a designation of the larger migratory Indian Kite for which I have used the specific name of '*melanotis*;' but the habits of '*M. govinda*,' as described by Sykes, are not those of this species, but of the smaller Indian Kites, which are non-migratory."

This note of Mr. Gurney's will not settle the question against me. I have closely observed the habits of *M. affinis*, *egyptius*, and *govinda*, and they are perfectly identical, as far as bold impudence is concerned. At Assensole both the large and the lesser Indian Kites were very common, and no one could distinguish them by their habits, so, with all deference to Mr. Gurney, Sykes's description of the habits will most perfectly fit the large Kite. We have one of Sykes's types, a large Kite of the species which Mr. Gurney calls *M. melanotis*; and, again, we have his description applicable *only* to the large bird, for the dimensions are those of the large bird. The accident of the small bird being in the same case does not invalidate the description, or render it inapplicable to the bird it clearly fits. Sykes did not know

* [It is almost needless to say that we are not responsible for our correspondent's opinions.—EDD.]

there were two species, and he has not described the lesser one at all, which, if not identical with *Milvus affinis*, as Mr. Gurney once supposed, requires a name; and this, I am afraid, would have to be the very inappropriate one of *Milvus palustris*, Anderson, applied to immature examples of the lesser Indian Kite (*vide* Pr. Asiatic Soc. Bengal, July 1873, pp. 142-147). I wish all ornithologists who are interested in this subject would carefully weigh what I have advanced, and would in future forbear to apply the term *govinda* to a Kite to which it is clearly inapplicable.

Mr. Hume has often insisted that there were three species of Kite in India; but I think this is a mistake, for both the larger and the lesser Kites are very variable as to size. The lesser one, *M. affinis* as I term it, is also very variable in its plumage, which ranges from uniform sooty brown to warm reddish brown, and much spotted. In Cashmere, the large Kite, *M. govinda* (the *M. melanotis* of Messrs. Gurney and Hume), abounds; and I had very good opportunities, when there, of observing its habits. I took its eggs also in Cashmere: they closely resemble those of *M. affinis*, but are slightly larger.

And now that I have touched upon Indian birds, I should like to add a few corrections respecting some of them. In the first vol. of the Catalogue of Birds in the British Museum, Mr. Sharpe does not admit the distinctness of *Aquila fulvescens*, Gray and Hardwicke, from *A. vindhiana* (footnote, p. 243). A good many examples of this fine Eagle have been obtained, and it is now known in its different stages of plumage, which are quite distinct from those of other Eagles. The barred or non-barred tail is of little consequence; but the style of barring on the tails of *A. vindhiana* and *A. fulvescens*, when barred (which they sometimes are *very slightly*), is quite different, the one being diagonal and the other square across. Besides this we have a circular nostril in *A. fulvescens*, and an oblong one in *A. vindhiana* and *A. rapax*. However, *A. fulvescens* is well able to speak for itself as to identity, and I shall let Mr. Sharpe alone till the British Museum has an example of this rare Eagle. It had not one when I was there, and

perhaps Mr. Sharpe had not then seen the bird. In his Catalogue Mr. Gurney protests against suppressing this Eagle, and refers to Mr. Sharpe's footnote above mentioned.

Sylvia minuscula, Hume.—This bird is only found in dry semi-desert places, and is not spread over India like *S. affinis*. In voice and habits, as well as in plumage, it strongly differs from *S. affinis*. I frequently met with it in Scind. About Sehwan it was very common.

Phylloscopus viridanus.—In vol. v. of the British Museum Catalogue, Mr. Seebohm gives *P. seebohmi* as a synonym. I examined the specimen very carefully and found the remains of the upper wing-bar. It was from Burmah, and none of the supposed *P. viridanus* from that country were correctly named. A very worn *P. plumbeitarsus*, such as *P. seebohmi* was, is not easily separated from *P. viridanus* similarly worn.

Phylloscopus viridipennis, Blyth.—I made a very careful examination of the two specimens (one of them the type) in the Calcutta Museum some years ago : they were small-sized examples of *P. trochiloides*. The name of the white-tailed Burmese bird should stand therefore as *P. presbytis*, Müller. Mr. Seebohm, in a footnote, contends that Müller's name must give way to Blyth's earlier name of *viridipennis* ; but let Mr. Seebohm show, if he can, that Blyth described the white tail-feathers. All I can say is, I am absolutely certain Blyth's birds were *P. trochiloides*, a species which varies in size as much as *P. rufus* does ; and Blyth was misled in discriminating the small ones just as I was mistaken in calling small *P. rufus*, *P. tristrami*. Blyth was much too good an ornithologist to overlook the white tail-feathers of *P. presbytis*. Blyth's specimens were in a very dilapidated condition when I last saw them, and by this time any conclusion drawn from them would be valueless ; but *P. trochiloides* was obtained by Jerdon at Darjeeling, where the white-tailed bird is not found. Mr. Hume has often contended that the white-tailed bird is *P. viridipennis* ; but such contention is useless when the type is *P. trochiloides*, and the description does not suit the white-tailed bird. If there be any doubt as to what

bird Müller meant by *P. presbytis*, I have defined the white-tailed bird smaller than *P. trochiloides*, but similarly coloured, by that name. At all events a synonym of *P. trochiloides* cannot be applied to it.

Phylloscopus affinis.—Mr. Seebohm says (B. M. Cat. v. p. 65) :—"This species appears to be subject to little or no seasonal change of plumage; nor does the slight abrasion of the feathers which takes place in summer make any appreciable change in the appearance of the bird." What can Mr. Seebohm have seen! Frequently the bird loses all its green and all its yellow except the eye-stripe or a portion of it, and it is indeed hard to tell what the little faded bird is.

Phylloscopus tytleri.—Only one example on record from "the plains of India" (p. 67). I think it must winter in the lower hills.

Phylloscopus humii.—Winters all over India, and not only "in the valley of the Ganges" (p. 67).

Hypolais caligata (p. 86).—"This subspecies"! Its note differs from that of *H. rama*, and when newly moulted this bird is red-brown as contrasted with the mouse-grey of *H. rama*. No two species could be more thoroughly distinct.

Acrocephalus bistrigiceps (p. 94).—It is also found in Burmah.

Lusciniola indica (p. 127).—"Jerdon's Grass-Warbler" is a strictly arboreal bird and winters in the plains of India generally.

Lusciniola fuscata (p. 128).—"Blyth's Grass-Warbler" is, if anything, more truly arboreal. Neither are *L. schwarzi* nor *L. fuliginiventris* "Grass-Warblers."

Lusciniola flaviventris (p. 131).—This is an *Horornis*.

Lusciniola neglecta (p. 131).—"Hume's Grass-Warbler." No grass where I met with it. It affects babool (acacia) and tamarisk jungle.

Lusciniola melanopogon (p. 133).—"Grass-Warbler" again! It is an aquatic bird, a Reed-Warbler.

Cettia fortipes (p. 136).—The *Horornis*-group cannot be put into the same genus as *Cettia*. I protest also against my *H. pallidus* being suppressed. I know both it and *H. fortipes* in life, and they are distinct.

Cettia pallidipes (p. 139).—A so-called *Cettia*, which is green above and white below !!

Cettia squamiceps (p. 142).—Worse and worse! This is not a *Cettia* anyhow.

I notice that Dr. Scully (Ibis, 1881, pp. 90, 583), in quoting my name, *Alauda guttata*, for the common Sky-Lark of Cashmere, says he can only distinguish it from *A. gulgula* by its superior size. When freshly moulted the two birds are of very different shades of brown, the Cashmere one being dull purplish brown, while the bird of the plains is warm reddish brown. The Sky-Larks are the most difficult group there is; but clearly such a bird as *A. dulcivox* is distinct from the little *A. gulgula*.

XLI.—On Mr. E. Lort Phillips's Collection of Birds from Somali-land. By Captain G. E. SHELLEY, F.Z.S.

(Plates X.—XII.)

MR. E. LORT PHILLIPS, F.Z.S., accompanied by his friends Messrs. James, Aylmer, and Thrupp, left Berbera, on the Gulf of Aden, on the 22nd December, 1884, and returned there again towards the middle of the following April. They journeyed nearly due south along the parallel 45° E. long. to about 5° N. lat. On leaving Berbera they crossed for the first eight miles a low flat country and then ascended to the high plateau-land 3000 feet above the sea. This plateau is a parched desert for about six months in the year, and it was during this period that most of the specimens were collected. The Egyptian Vulture, although a constant visitor to their camp so long as water was obtainable, was never seen during their long desert march of fourteen days between the wells of Bourou and Gerlogobie, while Crows (probably *Corvus affinis*) never failed to appear in the neighbourhood as soon as the tents were pitched. Nearly all the Crows' nests contained eggs of the Great Spotted Cuckoo, and in one nest there were twelve eggs, four only belonging to the rightful owner.

The tableland, which extends from north to south for about 280 miles, is dotted over with thousands of gigantic